

the light of the sun enjoyed, or any of the forces of nature utilized, without the use of land or its products. . . . Material progress cannot rid us of our dependence upon land; it can but add to the power of producing wealth from land; and hence, land is monopolised, it might go on to infinity without increasing wages or improving the condition of those who have but their labour. It can but add to the value of land and the power which its possession gives."

It is only upon the basis of a rational solution of the land question that the pressing social and international problems of our time can be solved. It is only by taking the value of land for public revenue that the burden of taxation imposed upon labour can be removed and the barriers erected between the free commercial intercourse of nations torn down. It is only by taking the value of land for public revenue, for the equal benefit of all citizens, that the exploitation by some others can be ended. It is only by making the land available on equal terms to all, that the opportunity can be given to all to earn a living for themselves in freedom and security, and the illusion destroyed that if men are not employed in making the munitions of war they can find no chance of working at useful occupations, or that tariffs are necessary to protect the British workman from the German, or the French from the Italian.

It is in this that the task of statesmanship is to be found, and only a clear recognition of the fundamental importance of the land question will lead the world out of its present turmoils.

F. C. R. D.

THE LAND QUESTION IN SPAIN

Reference has been made in recent issues of *Land & Liberty* to the fact that the land question underlies the present struggle in Spain. We are indebted to *Bodenreform* for the following information (quoted from the weekly *Schule der Freiheit*, 1st July). While in the course of centuries the population increased and took new life in the towns the conditions of the middle ages continued unchanged in the country districts. The land belonged essentially to the grandees and the church, and was cultivated by propertyless labourers. The feudal lords attached no great importance to improving the production from their properties and the method of cultivation remained almost unchanged for hundreds of years. Taking large estates of 100 hectares and upwards in 1930 there were 23,500 large proprietors who owned about 67 per cent of the land. On the other hand there were five million people who had to live by agriculture, and who had diminutive holdings of about 1 hectare (2½ acres). The propertyless land-workers were forced into a state of dependency. The landowners could demand unheard of rents, and the tenants were entirely at their mercy.

Even in pre-war days the necessity of doing something was apparent. Large numbers were emigrating to South America but the government was unwilling to challenge the nobility and the church. In 11 years only 11,000 hectares were made available for settlement. General Primo de Rivera became dictator in 1923. He too saw that something ought to be done, but his land reform consisted in buying only land which the owners desired to sell. In the course of 7 years 21,500 hectares were acquired. The land-workers were naturally much disappointed and disillusioned and their opinions became more and more radical. This dissatisfaction burst out in 1931 and 1932 in revolutionary disturbances which led to the fall of the monarchy and the establishment of the Republic.

The subsequent history is told in an article by Prof. Tolo Bonorko of Madrid (*Bodenreform*, 10th May). The Agrarian Law of September, 1932, decreed the expropriation of all the great estates of feudal origin and of all properties exceeding 50 hectares, if irrigated, or exceeding 750 hectares, if not irrigated. In addition estates held for speculation or whose cultivation was neglected were liable to expropriation. The expropriation without compensation of the estates of the grandees appeared like a penalty for the participation of some of these old noble families in the Monarchist revolt of August, 1932. The Government of the Right in 1934 and 1935 paid compensation to the grandees or reversed the expropriation. One of the first decrees of the Azana government in February of this year was to forbid such payments to the grandees. The area of the estates belonging to the grandees was 573,000 hectares, or a full third of the land to be expropriated. The other landowners were compensated on the basis of their tax declarations with bonds redeemable in 50 years with interest at five per cent.

In the beginning of March, 1936, the workers and tenants flowed back to the settlements which had been given to them by the first Republican land reform and had been afterwards taken away from them during the period of Right Government. The administration hastened to legalize these frequently forcible happenings. It endeavoured to repair in a hurry the omissions of centuries. These precipitate measures evoked the counter-revolution, and the struggle for power by means of civil war.

The following comes well from the London *Evening Standard*, the paper owned by Lord Beaverbrook. It was dated 30th July: "The roots of the present struggle go far back. They are in the soil of Spain. For years the Spanish landlords neglected their peasants, who are the poorest in the world. They left the administration of their estates to intendants, who fleeced the peasants. Then came the Revolution and an attempt at land reform by intellectual visionaries. The Republic's land reform has failed. There will be no peace in Spain until the land problem has been satisfactorily solved."

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The Conservative *Daily Telegraph* of 21st August allows Mr J. B. Firth in a special article to say: "Ferocity and fanaticism are frantic in combination, and this Spanish civil war is at one and the same time a war of political parties struggling for rival and irreconcilable forms of government, the agrarian war of a poverty-stricken and landless peasantry impatient to acquire the vast latifundia of the grandees and the Church, a bitter industrial war between Capital and Labour and, not least, a religious war."

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Another testimony in a Conservative paper, the *Glasgow Bulletin* of 28th August, is that of a Scotswoman newly returned after nine years in Spain, Mrs A. Scott, who, referring to Catalonia says: "Land there is too precious to be sold by the foot—it is paid for and cared for by the hands-breadth. The laws of land tenure are very complex, a man sometimes owning the vines, but not the soil they grow in. The landowner frequently exacts an exorbitant proportion of the harvest, good year or bad, without having put either money or work into it. Some families have worked the same land for generations, and only just not starved. "The land is for the men who work it" has become the slogan of the tenant *rabassaire*."